

Welcome to the STRIP'S BAWDIEST PARTY

Under the Big Top *and* Right Before Your Very Eyes

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK

When it's time to get out of the heat, get into the coolest new show in town. Enjoy a unique, irreverent and wild ride, under the tent at Absinthe.

Named after a distilled spirit once banned in the United States for fear it would cause people to go crazy, Absinthe is a heart racing, jaw dropping, mind swirling performance one can only see in Las Vegas.

"Prepare to be awed," said Scott Zeiger, co-CEO of Base Entertainment, producer of Absinthe along with Spiegelworld. "It isn't safe and that's part of the fun. Las Vegas has so many extraordinary and custom-built shows, but you do feel like you're in a safe cocoon. Inside the Spiegeltent is a show that's a true game changer for us in Vegas. It's very spectacular and very different, while at the same time being a throwback to another era."



Speigelworld's quirky, charming biergarten is a great pre- and post-show gathering spot, filled with the aroma of Baby's Badass Burgers, but the real draw is inside the tent. The circular Spiegelent traveled over 5,000 miles from Belgium, to stake its claim on the Roman Plaza in front of Caesars Palace. The intimate setting holds only 640 spectators and the front row is a mere 18 inches from the stage.

The tent, believed to be over 100 years old, required no bolts, screws or nails to assemble. Most of the action takes place on a small nine-foot diameter stage in the center. Any of the 13 routines will leave you laughing, cheering or holding your breath as the performers are close enough to touch. And the feats are amazing!

"The concept of a bawdy, adult Spiegelent is 150 years old," continued Zeiger. "Inside were acts of virtuosity that were non-language reliant. Performers could safely travel and entertain without a language barrier. In our setting, the intimacy allows the audience to embrace the personalities of the individual performers."

"It took a lot of hard work, energy and

thought to come up with something that was a game changer," continued Zeiger. "The show has been worked on in New York and Miami Beach for a couple of seasons. Our creative team has diligently scoured the world to find unique and important talent to fill those spots. The addition of a bawdy ringmaster and sexually and politically incorrect hosting is an extension of what worked so long ago. All of the elements have been properly honed and timed. We know exactly how long each needs to last and the order they need to play. And, the lighting and the music are an important element, too."

Ross Mollison, creative impresario for Speigelworld, is constantly in search of innovative and incredible acts to keep the show fresh. "Germany and London are great places to look. Australia is also another great source for talent. Sometimes I have to sit in the worst bar and ask where all the crazies live. The same thing is now happening in Vegas. It's become a great center of circus and cabaret acts."

"A lot of people talk down about the Vegas audience, but it's a global branded destination," continued Mollison. "It's the

most sophisticated market. People come here to have an extraordinary time and they want to see something different. They want to have a hangover sort of time, and Absinthe offers that with fun, skill and great beauty."

THE GAZILLIONAIRE AND PENNY PIBBETS

Any circus would be incomplete without a ringmaster and his loyal assistant, and Absinthe is no different. The Gazillionaire and his drum-playing, sock-puppet-performing assistant are the center of the carnival of characters. But, don't ask him how he made his money.

"I made a fortune but I don't talk about that too much," said The Gazillionaire. "There are too many people who can't be named. I really don't want to share my secrets. I have a mattress full of cash, but if someone has thoughts of robbing me, they have to find my house, get past my bodyguards, lasers and protective robot."

"When I found Penny, her Mom wanted to get her out of the house because she was annoying. She was initially just my assistant but she couldn't handle the paperwork so I put her in the show. Now we've worked

together for five years, but we're not together, if you know what I mean.

"In my spare time, I do a lot of partying and spend money on useless things. I'm not a performer but I hire a lot of people. It's a great tax write-off."

"I do a lot of errands for The Gazillionaire," said Penny, "like running to Target or doing his laundry. Now that I'm performing, a lot of people mistake me for a drummer, but I have no experience at it at all and I don't quite have the rhythm to bang on the thing. In my spare time I play the accordion, but The Gazillionaire won't let me perform it in the show because he says it's annoying. I also like to read books and write in my diary. And I like to eat good food."

"Las Vegas crowds are awesome," continued Penny. "It's a good fit and I hope we're here for a long time."

"Las Vegas is the best," The Gazillionaire concurred. "People are here to party and our show is a bit of a party. What makes us really unique is the intimacy of it. The tent is its own character and we do an awesome show with some of the best circus acts in the world."

"And everyone is really sexy," added Penny.

BALLOON BABE ANGEL PORRINO

If you ever wondered what a topless beauty tap-dancing while in a big balloon looks like, Absinthe is the place to go. Angel Porrino coyly flirts with the audience while balancing a huge balloon. But, once she steps inside, the fun starts. You'll just have to see it to understand.

"I've known how to tap dance since I was two years old," said Porrino. "It's such good exercise and you don't even realize it. I was originally hired just to tap dance, but then they added the balloon element. I was lucky enough to be trained properly by the woman who performed the act in New York."

It's so much fun! The balloon is filled with an air compressor, just like filling up a bouncy house.

"I love performing so close to the audience," continued Porrino. "There's no other show like this on the Strip. People hate being so distant. You can do the distance thing anywhere. With Absinthe, you can get in touch with and grasp the attention of the

entire audience, not just the first row. I love a new challenge and the stage is just the perfect amount of space."

THE ESTEEMED GENTLEMEN OF THE HIGHWIRE

The two most daring, amazing acts in the show are The Esteemed Gentlemen of the Highwire, and the Skating Aratas. Both of these will leave your jaw on the floor in utter awe.

Handsome Hank, Fat Frank and Tony Tightropes make up the highwire act that is anything but gentlemanly. Flirting, drinking and incredible skill keep your eyes up high as they perform just feet above your head without a safety net.

The act came together as a planned accident. "My wife is a seventh generation Wallenda," said Tightropes. "We knew each other as kids and both grew up in the circus in Sarasota, Florida. I didn't like to do the highwire, but when I was a teenager, I had to do it in order to date her. We were part of the seven-person pyramid that made a triumphant return to Detroit."

Tightropes was living in Chicago pursuing an acting career. A friend of his





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STRIP'S BAWDIEST PARTY

Angel Porrino coyly flirts with the audience while balancing a huge balloon during her tap-dancing act in Absinthe.



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since childhood, Handsome Hank, had also made the pilgrimage there. Tightropes trained Hank to do the highwire. Eventually, the two of them met Fat Frank, and they developed a great friendship as well as a team.

Fat Frank is the man in the G-string who always wanted to be a clown. Hank's Dad is an acrobatic coach, and while he trained with him the three guys began to work together. "Tony had asked me to do the seven-man pyramid on the highwire," said Frank. "It seemed so difficult, but I felt if I got the training, I could do it. I went to Tony's back yard in the middle of winter to stand and hold a bar. It was freezing!"

Eventually the three would leave the cold and head for the desert. "Gaz called and said Spiegelworld was going to do Absinthe in Vegas and they needed a big closing act," Tightropes said. "Gaz and I had been friends for a long time. My wife was pregnant so we couldn't do anything together, but I thought about doing an act with just guys. I wrote some tricks and storylines to match everyone's skills. This concept had never been done before. We wanted to do something cutting edge and spectacular in Las Vegas because there is no other highwire act here."

"The entire show is very intimate," Hank said. "It's a real raw experience. You can see our muscles and our sweat. There are no tricks or gimmicks, just skill. When you're on the wire,



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Husband and wife team Vittorio and Evgeniya are the Skating Aratas a.k.a the daredevils on roller skates.



THE SKATING ARATAS

Husband and wife team Vittorio and Evgeniya are daredevils on roller skates. Vittorio comes from a seventh generation circus family and is a mix of seven different nationalities. Evgeniya's background is dance and acrobatics. Vittorio's Dad performed in a highwire act at the Desert Inn in 1966, and his uncle owns Circus Vargas which was used in the filming of "Water for Elephants."

Vittorio grew up in the U.K. and Evgeniya was raised in the Ukraine. They met performing an acrobatic dance routine in German dinner theater. This is their first time to our magical city.

"I've been doing this act since I was a kid," said Vittorio. "I performed with my sister for 12 years. I just taught Evgeniya, my wife, how to do this four years ago. We trained for 10 hours a day, and she caught on very quickly."

"It's a hard act to maintain," Vittorio continued. "It's very strenuous. I do a lot of free weight lifting to keep my back muscles strong. We also get deep tissue massages. We never complain. It's part of the job. We really love the buzz of the audience and the appreciation they give us. We're blessed

that we love what we do and we give each show 150 percent.

"We're very genuine on stage. We want people to know that we're married and very much in love with each other. The act is difficult to perform safely. We trust each other completely and that keeps it safe. We know exactly what each other is thinking. I'm one of the very few who skates with his eyes closed, so I have to feel my way through parts of the act. It's a trick my Mom taught me when I was very young. It keeps me from getting dizzy. So, that non-verbal communication with my wife is crucial."

"Absinthe is something I've never experienced before. On a large stage, you can't even see the audience, just the lights. Here you see the audience reaction every second. It's very important part of the show because there's an energy that transfers between the audience and performers."

General admission tickets are a cool \$69, and VIP seats for \$99 grant you early entrance through the green phone booth to soak up the atmosphere before the show starts, as well as access to the VIP lounge adjacent to the tent. Find out more at www.AbsintheVegas.com. □

you're always off-balance, trying to get yourself on-balance. We train really hard to block things out. We've thrown soccer balls at each other, pushed poles, whatever we can be prepared. We want any mishaps to be controllable.

"The quiet part of the act really warms our hearts every time," Hank continued. "The audience is so involved. They really care! We really need the quiet so we can hear each other's commands. The intensity of focus during that part is critical because of the heightened element of danger."

"The crowds are pretty rewarding," said Tightropes. "We want people to experience what we've trained for all our lives. This show is so unique to be so close to the audience. And, the energy is amazing! No amount of marketing or advertising would do this show justice. It's not just circus acts and singers. There are so many amazing acts in this show and each one is as powerful as the next."



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